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LABOUR: A PARTY OF CAPITALISM

WAGING WAR ON IRAQ - BUT WHY?

DE LEON AND THE SPGB

EXPANDING EUROPEAN CAPITALISM

STRAIGHT AND CROOKED THINKING

DO ECONOMISTS CONTROL THE ECONOMY?

LETTER TO THE NEW SCIENTIST

LETTER TO THE ECONOMIST

**OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF
THE SOCIALIST PARTY
OF GREAT BRITAIN**

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SOCIALISM NEEDS YOU! AND YOU NEED SOCIALISM!

The Problem

Without Socialists there can be no Socialist political organisation and no Socialism. The Socialist Party of Great Britain needs members in order to carry out Party work. We need writers, speakers and distributors of our journal, Socialist Studies, and other Party literature. We need committed Socialists who reject capitalism and accept the urgent need for a new society based upon production for direct social use, not for profit. And we need members who accept and will be prepared to defend the SPGB's Object and Declaration of Principles.

The Solution

The solution is simple. If you agree with our analysis of capitalism, the Socialist objective and the political means required to establish common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society, then you are already a Socialist. But individual Socialists cannot alone make a marked impact upon Capitalism. The struggle for Socialism has to be an organised one and this requires collective action by the working class.

This is why a Socialist political party is vitally important. It focuses attention on the class struggle and enables workers to act with unity and strength. If you are a Socialist then the first step is to join the Socialist Party of Great Britain. We are not a sect or a cult. There are no intellectuals in the Party, only intelligent men and women who share the same class interests, Socialist ideas and Socialist objective. However, we only want members who agree with the Socialist case and if you do agree with us then we want you as a member.

What Next?

If you agree with the Socialist case then the next step is to apply for membership. We have no leaders. No one will tell you what to do and to think. All we expect is political commitment and enthusiasm to work with other Socialists to achieve the establishment of Socialism. Joining the Socialist Party of Great Britain will be the single most important political decision you will make. One more Socialist is one less worker voting for capitalist parties like Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. A Socialist party with a growing membership will make an increasing impact on the political class struggle. If you want a world without unemployment, exploitation, war, poverty, discomfort and inequality you should seriously consider joining us. **ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP** to The Socialist Party of Great Britain, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB; www.spgb.org.uk enquiries@spgb.org.uk (e-mail).

LABOUR: JUST ANOTHER CAPITALIST POLITICAL PARTY

Another failed year of the Labour government brings another conference of recrimination, blame and anger. A conference where open debate is stifled, democracy is an empty word, and policy is dictated by a detached leadership and forced onto a craven and impotent membership.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain, as long ago as 1906, demonstrated beyond a shadow of doubt that the Labour party was not Socialist but existed to compete with other capitalist parties to administer the interests of British capitalism.

The Labour party is an unrepresentative and undemocratic political animal. There is a damp proof course between the membership and the Parliamentary Labour party. The whips force the Parliamentary Labour party to obey the Prime Minister. Unelected intellectuals, businessmen and career civil servants are parachuted into No 10 think tanks. Those loyal to the leader are pressed onto local constituencies even if they had once been Tory grandes. A party of the working class the Labour party is not.

The Labour party member on a slum estate is not the person found at this conference wearing a smart suit, eating at smart restaurants and talking endlessly into a mobile 'phone to plot against this or that government minister. The Labour party member who honestly sees around them the poverty and squalor of working class life is not the PPE Oxbridge graduate heading a think tank seminar sponsored by corporate capitalists at a fringe meeting where the only working class are those serving the canapes and expensive wine. The resolutions passed at poorly attended constituency meetings never get beyond the Head Office dustbin.

Why remain in such an anti-Socialist and anti-working class political party

with its cult of leadership? This is the question which is asked by Socialists of the Labour membership. And the pathetic reply is that they would rather have a Labour party in power attacking the interests of workers, attacking the weak and introducing policies inherited from the Tories than have a Tory party in government. It is tribal idiocy.

Such a shallow argument allows the Labour government to send workers to kill other workers in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It allows thirdrate ministers to introduce anti-trade union legislation to break strikes and to pass racist laws against workers from abroad who try to seek work in this country.

Not that many Labour party members can stomach the policies of the Labour government with its spin, deception and craven obsequiousness towards the capitalist class. 200,000 members have left since 1997. Unfortunately, they have either abandoned politics altogether or joined a capitalist left wing party like the Socialist Alliance or Socialist Workers Party. They did not become Socialists.

Membership of the Socialist Party of Great Britain are outside the Labour party conference. We are here to remind the delegates that there is a Socialist party and to spell out the reasons why the Labour party is just another capitalist party. We are here to remind the Labour party conference that there is a practical alternative to capitalism: the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

CHINESE CAPITALISM MEETS BRITISH CAPITALISM

The businessmen Blair took with him to China were as follows:- *'Lord Powell of China (Britain Business Council), Russell Greig of Glaxo, Lord Levine, Chairman of Lloyds plus representatives from BP, Shell, Barclays, Standard Chartered, Rolls Royce and P&O' Financial Times, 22 July 2003)*

WAGING WAR ON IRAQ - BUT WHY?

In our pamphlet, **War and Capitalism** (1996), we argued that, whatever governments may say, wars are invariably "*caused by commercial rivalry between competing sections of the capitalist class*". We also pointed out that the claim that wars are fought about freedom or democracy is an obvious pretext since "*it is these freedom-loving governments and their friends in business which have sold arms, from guns to nerve gas, to these dreadful dictators*" and among the examples cited was the fact that the British government and British arms companies sold arms to Saddam Hussein.

In short, politicians who claim that a war is a just one because it is about freedom and democracy are simply not to be believed ... Instead of going to war against a dictatorship, capitalist governments are much more likely to sell them weapons ...

A government's real concern is the so-called national interest - the interests of their capitalists. Only when these capitalist interests are involved do governments find it necessary to go to war ... Liberation was never the issue, only a pretext.

Bush and Blair told us they went to war against Iraq for a variety of reasons. They argued that Saddam Hussein held secret stocks of highly dangerous WMD - "*weapons of mass destruction*", dirty weapons of a biological, chemical and nuclear nature. That meant, they claimed, not only that Iraq posed a threat to other countries in the region but even threatened London and Washington.

But the fact is that they already knew, from the information they received from General Hussein Kamal, who, in 1995, defected and told the UN weapons inspectors that Iraq's weapons programmes had been destroyed in 1991 (**Private Eye**, 2-15 May 2003 citing a **Newsweek** report). There were also the

reports of the UN inspectors, showing that it was most unlikely that Iraq still had significant quantities of WMD.

Now, more than three months after the war was launched, neither the American nor the British troops have yet been able to produce any evidence of that alarming arsenal of Weapons of Mass Destruction. That allegation seems as bogus as Blair's dodgy dossier, with its "*sexed-up*" version of a PhD student's thesis, copied from the Internet and "*improved*" by who knows who in Downing Street, not to mention the forged document which Bush relied on in his State of the Union address as proof that Iraq had tried to obtain uranium from Africa.

Not to worry, said the politicians. They were sure that Saddam had these terrifying weapons but had hidden them. Or perhaps they had been destroyed before the war got started?

"Intelligence leaves no doubt that Iraq continues to possess and conceal lethal weapons" - George W Bush, 18 March 2003.

"We are asked to accept that Saddam decided to destroy those weapons. I say that such a claim is palpably absurd" - Tony Blair, 18 March 2003.

"It is possible Iraqi leaders decided they would destroy them prior to the conflict" - Donald Rumsfeld, US Defence Secretary, 28 May 2003.

The Independent, 29 May 2003.

Since even a child can tell that such assertions sound like frantic bluffing, it is not surprising that the politicians fell back on a different justification for this war that someone had, long ago, decided would take place, come hell or high water. This was the argument that Saddam Hussein was an evil dictator and the Iraqi people needed to be "*liberated*" from his evil regime, so that they could enjoy the blessing of democracy and the rule of law.

But there were problems about this argument. After all, it was the US government which had helped Saddam to seize power. In 1980 when he attacked Iran this was done with the encouragement and approval of Washington and London. Even when, in March 1988, he used nerve gas to kill at least 5000 Kurds in Halabja, the British government not only continued to supply him with weaponry but actually increased the amount he could purchase, using the government's own Export Credit Guarantee Department to increase substantially his lines of credit. The items exported included chemical warfare equipment and antidotes. For instance, in 1985, "*Thatcher signed a £270 million Jordan Defence Package, including the sale of NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) equipment. It included 70,000 syringes and 1,000 chemical warfare training suits*" (Richard Norton-Taylor, **Truth is a Difficult Concept - Inside the Scott Inquiry**, 1955, p55).

Throughout the 1980s and right up to 1990 when Saddam attacked Kuwait the British government was enthusiastically supplying him with military hardware and also with the means to develop an effective Iraqi armament programme. During the long-drawn out blood bath of the Iran-Iraq war the British government continued to supply Saddam with whatever he could possibly need by way of weaponry, while the US government gave him financial support. In 1999, when John Pilger researched his TV documentary on the effect of sanctions (**Paying the Price - Killing the Children of Iraq**), he found ample evidence of the complicity of the 'democratic' governments of Britain and the US in supplying Saddam throughout this period:

*Robert Gates, CIA director between 1991 and 1993, told Pilger that Saddam was known to be "a thug who had very good ideas about how to perpetuate himself in power". Said Aburish, author of the biography **Saddam Hussein: The Politics of Revenge**, said that the dictator could thank the United States for helping him to power, keeping him there and providing him with financial aid during the country's war with Iran ...*

Similarly, British Cabinet ministers offered Saddam loans and trade deals "They sold him anti-nuclear, biological and chemical warfare suits and boots", said Aburish. A leading member of the Iraqi opposition in exile, Laith Kubba, explained that Britain sided with Saddam Hussein in the war against Iran and simply "brushed aside" his human rights violations against his own people. "He used chemical warfare against the Iranians and against the Iraqis" said Kubba.

The ingredients for Saddam Hussein's biological weapons included anthrax made at the British government's Porton Downs laboratory and botulism developed by a company in Maryland, in the United States.

Anthony Hayward, *In the name of Justice - The Television Reporting of John Pilger, 2001* (pp 169-170).

With this historical background in mind, it is clear that in the cutthroat jungle of international relations, where alliances are simply a matter of temporary expediency, yesterday's friend can quickly become the next day's enemy. Iran had been a favourite of the US and UK governments while the Shah ruled, regardless of his atrocious record of torture and repression. But after his overthrow, by Islamic fundamentalists bitterly opposed to the US, the American government backed Saddam - "my enemy's enemy is my friend". Later still, when Saddam made the mistake of invading Kuwait - a state with a despotic hereditary ruling dynasty but a client state of the American government -, it was time to turn against America's former favourite.

If not WMD or Human Rights - Then WHY?

This is a question that many - in Britain and in the US - are asking. Here are a few angry, sceptical voices from America:

We haven't found the "thousands of tons of chemical agents" or the

"massive stockpile of biological weapons" and the imminent threat of nukes turns out to be a scam ... A lot of folks are busily parsing the difference between a lie and an exaggeration, a spinmeister and a fabricator ...

So we don't know whether there are WMDS. But more important, we still can't know the real reasons why Bush went to war and why he thought those reasons wouldn't "sell" ... Did we launch this war ... to tell the post-9/11 world not to screw around with a superpower? To rid the world of Saddam Hussein and gamble that democracy will come up on the dice, not fundamentalism? Was it for oil? Revenge? All of the above?

*The real lie is that the administration didn't (dare?) make its essential case for war. And the real shame is not that we were conned but that, so far, we don't mind. **We Went to War Under False Circumstances**, by Ellen Goodman (**Boston Globe**, June 26 2003).*

*Certainly the world is well rid of a nasty dictator, but that wasn't the reason we were given for invading Iraq. Our stated reasons were WMDs and terrorism. But we went before the world with "facts" built on fantasy and twisted interpretations of intelligence. Now there are thousands of dead and injured, Iraq is in chaos and we are stuck there for a very long time. Does anyone care that our leaders lied to us, and if they are willing to lie to us on war and peace, what other subjects are fair game? **When Images Drown Out The Words We Need to Hear**, by Floyd J McKay (**Seattle Times**, same date).*

... is the 'Vietnam syndrome' really gone from the national consciousness? Is there not as fundamental similarity ... that in both instances we see the most powerful country in the world sending its armies, ships and planes half way around the world to invade and bomb a small country for reasons which become harder and harder to justify? The justifications were created, in both situations, by lying to the American public ...

What was not talked about publicly at the time of the Vietnam War was something said secretly in intra-governmental memoranda - that the interest of the United States in Southeast Asia was not the establishment of democracy, but the protection of access to the oil, tin and rubber of that region. In the Iraqi case, the obvious crucial role of oil in the US policy has been whisked out of sight, lest it reveal less than noble motives in the drive to war. The Specter of Vietnam, by Howard Zinn (Tom Paine.com, same date).

"Less than noble motives"? How very regrettable and deplorable. There is more about oil as a major influence on US policy in the Vietnam War in our pamphlet **War and Capitalism** (p25), as for instance this quotation:

If and when the US wins its objectives there (in Vietnam), oil exploration could conceivably be successful enough to turn that part of the world into another South Louisiana-Texas-type producing area. This would be one of the biggest booms in the industry's history. Asian Pacific Next on World Boom List, by John Scott (Petroleum Engineer, June 1970).

The claims that the invasion of Iraq was because Iraq had a vast quantity of weapons of mass destruction, or was done to liberate the people of Iraq from an evil dictator and set up a democratic political system, were clearly untenable. That is especially the case when set against the '*human rights*' record of the American government with its Guantanamo Bay concentration camp. Even the Top People's paper, **The Times** (July 5 2003) questions the treatment of men and children detained at Camp Delta.

Lawyers furious as US builds death chambers

Matthias Kelly, QC, chairman of the Bar of England and Wales, said that the proposed trials were "totally illegitimate and a violation of every rule in international law ... The construction of execution chambers makes virtually every lawyer in the Western world extremely angry. The idea

that there is an artificial creation or enclave which according to the Americans is beyond the purview of all recognised systems of law is repugnant".

Mr Kelly, also a member of the New York Bar and US Federal Bar, added: "If America wants to put people on trial, why not put them on trial before a recognised international tribunal? ... It is wholly inappropriate and in fact outrageous for the United States to create this special mechanism" ...

Neil Sonnett, a former president of the National Association of Criminal Defence Lawyers, said: "The State Department issues a report every year in which it criticises those nations that conduct trials before secret military tribunals. What I'm hearing about sounds alarmingly like something similar".

As a leftover from America's last war of "liberation", there are over 650 men and children detained, some for perhaps 18 months, at this US military base in Cuba, suspected of being either members of the Taliban or of al-Qaeda. Yet it is a matter of historical record that the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan with the backing of the CIA in order to ensure that the Soviet troops were defeated. It is also a matter of historical record that the Saudi head of the al-Qaeda terrorist network, Osama bin Laden, also benefited from Uncle Sam's helping hand.

As for those taken prisoner in the current Iraq war, no one seems to know either how many there are or where they are being held. Some may have been sent to other US military bases, such as that on the island of Diego Garcia, leased from the British government.

The US government is doing its best to evade its Geneva Convention obligations, just as it disregarded its responsibility to prevent looting and disorder in Baghdad, once it became the legally responsible 'occupying power'.

So of all wars this one seems hardest of all for even professional politicians to justify. Any attempt to argue in support of the invasion and occupation of Iraq comes up against the inevitable charge of double standards. Socialists have consistently argued that leaders are of no use to the working class, and there is abundant evidence on the record of leaders who have blatantly lied. To put your trust in leaders is to invite deception. For leader, read liar.

Waging 'war on terror'

As for the Bush government's record on human rights after the September 11 attack (2001), large numbers of people, in many countries, have found themselves incarcerated without any legal redress. As **The Independent** (26 June 2003) reported:

12,117 people have vanished from their homes since 11 September 2001 in the 'war on terror'. They have been branded as terrorists, enemy combatants, 'material witnesses' or just undesirable aliens. Most are in secret jails with no access to lawyers or the Red Cross. Some have been interrogated by the CIA and MI5 using 'stress and duress' tactics. Others have been sent to be questioned in countries where torture is commonplace. They are subject to no judicial process. They do not know if they will be locked up for months, years or even decades. To their families, they are simply missing.

Since September 11 laws have been passed which enable the United States government to act like a ruthless, totalitarian regime. Universities, for instance, have seen the return of the 'guilt by association' system whereby they must report any - staff or students - who might be thought insufficiently patriotic. Researchers in this category soon find their project's funding cut off and themselves effectively blacklisted. This is a return to the methods of the McCarthy-Nixon witch hunts of fifty years ago.

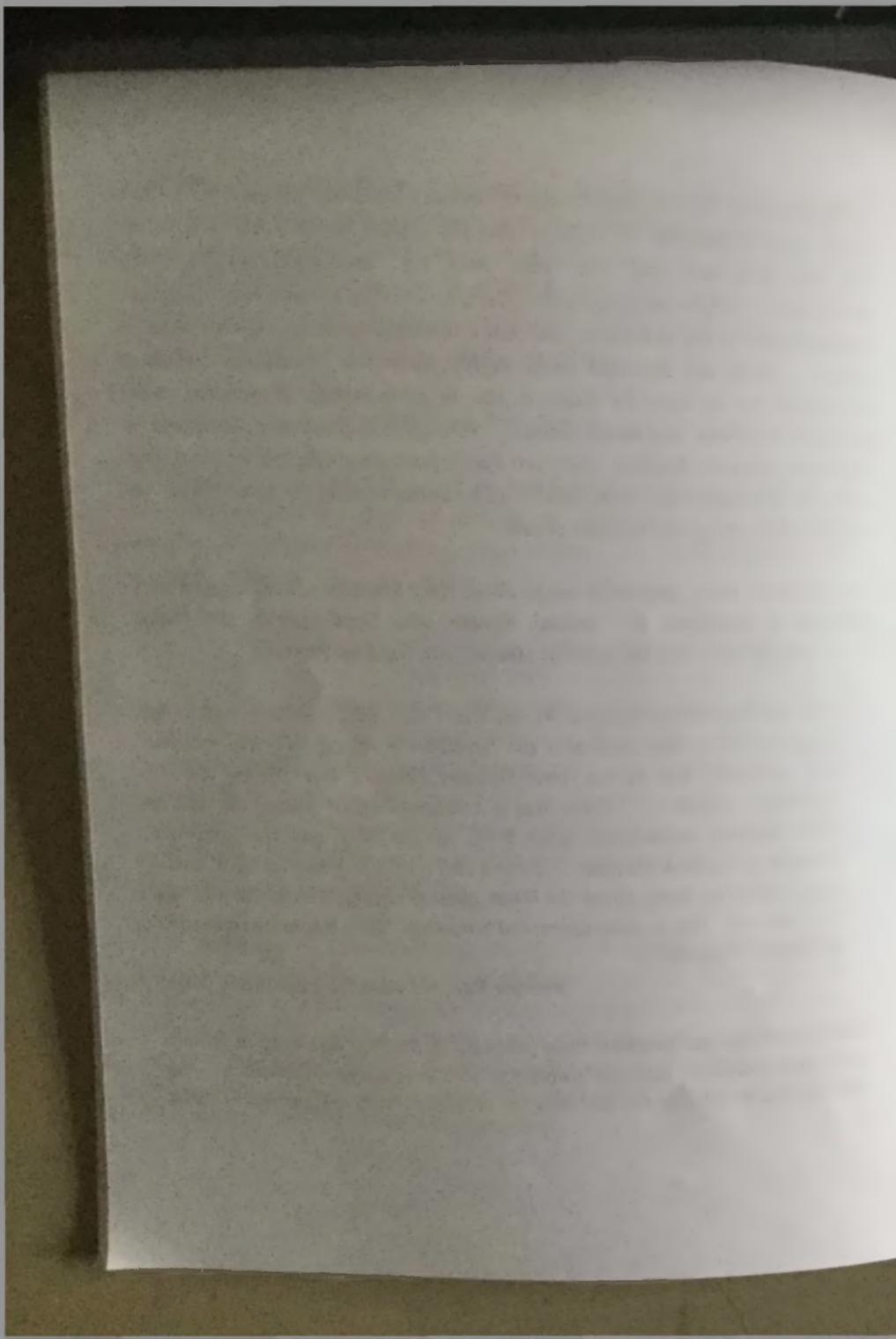
As the report by the US Department of Justice's Inspector General Glenn Fine shows, since September 11 2001, within the United States over 1200 people had been detained, and 766 were held for "prolonged periods using immigration charges as a pretext. The Justice Department has refused to release names of the detainees, and has conducted hearings against them in secret ... Many are detained under highly restrictive conditions, including 'lock down' for at least 23 hours a day in permanently illuminated cells; handcuffs, leg-irons, and heavy chains ... FBI officials frustrated the efforts by detainees' attorneys' families, and even law enforcement officials, to determine where the detainees were being held ... (**The Independent**, 26 June 2003). So much for democracy and the rule of law.

And in almost every speech he made about Iraq, President Bush slipped in a reference to September 11. Indeed, directly after September 11 the White House was trying to link the terrorist attacks with Saddam Hussein:

... former NATO boss General Wesley Clark told NBC television's Meet the Press last month that, days after the Twin Tower tragedy, the White House had pressured him to say that Saddam Hussein was behind the 11 September attacks ... "There was a concerted effort during the fall of 2001, starting immediately after 9/11, to pin 9/11 and the terrorism problem on Saddam Hussein ... I got a call on 9/11. I was on CNN, and I got a call at my home [from the White House] saying, 'You got to say this is connected. This is state-sponsored terrorism. This has to be connected to Saddam Hussein'"

Private Eye, No 1084, 11 July-24 July 2003.

Clark's comments got precious little publicity in the US, and none in Britain where most journalists are truly '*embedded*' with their government sources - the spin machine which ensures that only the official version is supposed to reach us.



By 1924 it was clear to President Coolidge that "*it is even probable that the supremacy of nations may be determined by the possession of available petroleum and its products*" (quoted p268). As Denny noted "*Belligerent support of American oil companies abroad by the Wilson, Harding and Coolidge Administrations indicates this [policy of support for these companies] is conceived as a fundamental and continuing policy*" (p272). Even more explicitly, he wrote that "*The most provocative activities of the State Department since the Great War have been in the service of oil*" (p20).

Just as then, so today. Nation-states recognise the need to protect their industrial, commercial and military interests, and since oil is so hugely important a factor in ensuring military power, just for that reason alone oil would be an important factor determining national policy. Various lucrative and profitable industries have been developed where oil or petrochemicals have been the essential raw material. Almost anything we use which can be described as made of 'synthetic' materials - plastics and PVC, rayon and nylon, polythene and a host of other materials - are derived from oil. Moreover the development of the automobile industry vastly increased the United States' determination to control as much as possible of the world's oil fields and oil reserves.

As Denny's book showed, US governments saw how necessary it was to back American oil companies as they contested British supremacy in one oil-field after another. Like the British, they saw the opportunity to establish an empire. With that went a consciousness that the oil production industry was exceptionally important in determining the direction of US foreign policy. As Noam Chomsky noted in relation to various US wards and '*interventions*' over the years:

Resource control and other such interests are often at stake, but rarely in the target of attack itself, at any significant level (with some exceptions, eg oil producers, including Indonesia in 1958).

Furthermore, Cold War issues were usually marginal to intervention ... for example, in 1958, with regard to the three major world crises that Eisenhower and Dulles identified at the National Security Council: Indonesia, North Africa, Middle East, all Islamic, but more significantly, all oil producers. Eisenhower stressed emphatically that there was no Russian involvement ...

Although the resources of the Balkans are of no great interest, their strategic location is, not only with regard to Europe ... but also the Middle East. The first major post-war counter insurgency campaign, in Greece, was motivated in large part by concern over control of Middle East oil ... Though secondary, similar concerns now extend to Central Asia.

The New Military Humanism, 1999, pp136-7

All this helps explain why it is that the Bush White House is obsessed by oil interests and manned by oilmen. And why it is that almost every war or 'military intervention' of recent years turns out to be driven by oil interests. This is the element of continuity in US foreign policy, and shows how closely capitalist commercial interests are bound up with government policy-making. Denny quoted from a 1927 article on "Conditions Affecting the Petroleum Prospects of the Empire" by a British oil man, Sir Thomas H Holland, illustrating this point:

The exploitation of petroleum has become controlled by companies sufficiently powerful to establish their own intelligence branches and sufficiently influential to advise their governments on questions of international policy, for their interests and the interests of the nation as a whole roughly coincide (p273).

Of course "the interests of the nation as a whole" does not exactly mean that. For as we all know, we - the vast majority of those who make up that fictional entity "the nation" - after all the fighting is done, we end up no richer than

before. The oil fields and pipelines that are fought over are not ours and never will be. Workers have no interest in fighting and killing each other over the competing commercial interests of the capitalist class.

When capitalists compete against each other it is over raw materials, trade routes, strategic points of interest, access to markets and sources of cheap labour. When workers are forced to compete against each other, it is over jobs, housing, hospital beds and the like. Wars are not fought in our interests.

So the politicians and their spin doctors and tame "*embedded*" journalists have shuffled around, pushing one plausible story after another to explain why it was so necessary to attack Iraq, and always failing to explain it in terms of the real interests at stake. In doing so they expose for all but the most stupidly gullible that the real reason for wars in the Middle East and elsewhere is the continuing, sordid conflict between rival blocs of the capitalist class over the earth's resources, and their competition in global markets.

Already these same politicians are making plans for their next war - or wars. How long will the world's working class continue to support slavishly this system with its endless class conflict, insecurity and the endemic nightmare of modern warfare? Ruthless competition for oil has been responsible for some of the worst crimes of the 20th century: Churchill's bombing of Iraqi Kurds with poison gas (Chomsky, *op.cit.* p62), and - 75 years ago - the betrayal by the US government of the Armenians "*for a share in Mosul oil*" (Denny, *op.cit.* p163). Since then genocide has become almost a commonplace.

Some 50 years ago a Russian writer, Leonid Andreyev, wrote this comment on the world as he saw it: "*The crazy world, ... now reddened with blood, now bathed in tears, was marking its course through space with the groans of the sick, the hungry and the injured*". Things are no better now. As long as capitalism lasts, it breeds conflict, just as it breeds competition. The choice remains - between Socialism or barbarism.

DID DE LEON INFLUENCE THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The group who currently control the Clapham-based Socialist party claim that Daniel De Leon "*influenced*" the early members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain. By implication the Socialist Party of Great Britain's Object and Declaration of Principles and Party policy owe a debt to De Leon. This is wholly specious nonsense.

If we look at Stephen Coleman's book "**Daniel De Leon**" (1990) it does not actually argue that the SPGB was influenced by De Leon, apart from citing remarks made towards the end of his life by T A Jackson in his political memoir "*Sole Trumpet*" (1953).

On the contrary, Coleman supplies plenty of evidence against such a thesis. First, De Leon was and remained influenced by Bellamy's Utopia, **Looking Backward**, and the SPGB has always rejected Utopianism. Second, De Leon held to the Erfurt Programme line that religion is a private matter while the SPGB took the line that religion is a public, political issue, and published a pamphlet defending this view. Third, De Leon had already abandoned his "*political*" line before the SPGB was established. Fourth, De Leon was clearly more tolerant of reformism than the early SPGB in his relationship with the Second International which the Party opposed.

This is not the case with another Clapham member, David Perrin, in his more recent book "**The Socialist Party of Great Britain**" (2000). He states that "*the views of the impossibilist American SLP undoubtedly had an influence on both the SPGB and the SLP*", and he cites as a reference Coleman's book (p156), but gives no quotations or other references to support this assertion.

So while Coleman is clear that the early De Leon differed largely from the post-1904 De Leon, Perrin does not even hint at this. For him the "*undoubted*" influence of De Leon relates to industrial unionism, not to the 1898 "*What means this Strike?*" pamphlet of which Perrin seems to be ignorant. Perrin makes no mention of De Leon's dealings with the reformist SPA, and his support at Congresses of the Second International for resolutions calling for merger and unity.

We also need to place T A Jackson in some context for his remarks appear to be pivotal in this revisionist history. Jackson had been a founder member of the SPGB, but he had left the Party, first to join the ILP and then to go on to establish the Communist Party of Great Britain.

In his book Jackson refers to the SPGB as "*the impossibilists*" (p65). Nowhere does he mention the Socialist Party of Great Britain by name. All we have as evidence is his assertion that one of the reasons why the Party split from the Social Democratic Federation was that "*we, youngsters, were much under the influence of the weekly **People**, and Daniel De Leon's brand of doctrinaire Marxism*" (p66).

Jackson goes on to relate how he attended the economics classes of Jack Fitzgerald, another founder member of the SPGB. Fitzgerald drew the class's attention to Marx's **Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte**, then available from New York in De Leon's translation (p61).

Jackson then states that Fitzgerald also suggested the economics class should read the **Weekly People**, the official organ of the American SLP, edited by De Leon. According to Jackson, Fitzgerald claimed that this was:

the best Socialist journal published in English" (p61).

No concrete evidence is given. Merely hearsay. A recollection made some fifty years after the event.

In the 1950's as an ardent Stalinist, it suited Jackson's politics to associate the SPGB with De Leon. The line taken at the time by the Communist Party was that anyone associated with De Leon was suspect, dogmatic and politically naive. However, he does not tell us who are the "we youngsters" referred to. No names are given.

And this is the book on which Coleman and others at Clapham base their evidence that the early Socialist Party of Great Britain was influenced by De Leon. No historian of any note would use Jackson's memoirs without qualification and conclude that the Party was influenced by De Leon. A secondary source book based upon prejudiced memory is highly suspect, especially where other, primary, source material exists and, all the more so, since the primary source material counters this argument.

We would also point out that Jack Fitzgerald was not the Socialist Party of Great Britain. He was just one person out of the 142 founding members. Just because Fitzgerald might or might not have been influenced by De Leon when he was in the Social Democratic Federation does not mean that the SPGB was influenced by De Leon's writings.

The SPGB was always quite clear in its official publications where the Party stood in relation to De Leon. One of hostility. In the 1932 pamphlet *"The Socialist Party of Great Britain and Questions of the Day"*, the Party made the point that the Socialist Labour Party was "crippled at birth" (p9) and "it soon became apparent that the members of this party had really only changed their idols, Hyndman, Quelch and company were deposed, and De Leon and Connolly took their places" (p9).

The small inconsequential faction within the SPGB who were attracted to Industrial Unionism either left or were expelled. In fact, in 1909 Fitzgerald debated against the one-time Party member, E J B Allen, who had resigned from the Party to join the Industrial League.

Bourgeois historians have an obsession with individuals. For Socialists what counts is the conscious and political development of the working class to the point where it forms a Socialist majority. All play a part in a Socialist organisation; those who speak and write, those who sell the literature and those who just argue the Socialist case with friends, family and whoever else will listen to them.

The Party has always rejected leadership, no matter how well-meaning. Political theory and policy have always been determined by the Party as a whole. What counts in the Party are not the idiosyncratic ideas and beliefs of individual members but the fact that the membership subscribe to the Object and Declaration of Principles; that the Party controls the journal and the pamphlets which set out the Socialist case against capitalism, and that Party decisions are democratically arrived at and acted upon.

There is no evidence that the Party's Object and Declaration of Principles was influenced by De Leon. There is no evidence that the Party's 1905 **Manifesto** was influenced by De Leon. And, from the early editions of the **Socialist Standard**, not a whisper of his name. This is especially significant since, in the early days, the **Socialist Standard** carried a number of articles, reprints, etc by European Socialists. Moreover, De Leon was an active writer and translator. If the early SPGB members were actually influenced by De Leon as claimed, you would expect them to have indicated this - perhaps by occasionally quoting him at least.

When the initial Executive Committee met on 18 June 1904 the EC declared the following publications suitable for sale by members: **Socialism and the Worker**, by Sorge; **Wage Labour and Capital**, by Marx; **Socialism and Radicalism**, by Aveling; Liebknecht's **No Compromise** and **The Socialist Revolution** by Kautsky (see **The Monument**, B Barltrop p42). Nothing whatsoever by De Leon. And no recommendation was made by the EC, which included Fitzgerald, for members to take out a subscription to the **Weekly People**.

The academic parlour game of tracing the "*influence*" of someone's ideas on somebody else's work is largely sterile. Politics cannot be reduced to stylistic dilettantism. Even if Fitzgerald did advocate the reading of the **Weekly People** when he was running economics classes in the SDF this does not mean that the early Party was influenced by De Leon. The foremost theoretical influences on the founders of the Party were the materialist conception of history, the labour theory of value and the political concept of the class struggle.

Academics and would-be academics have a problem with the SPGB. It was not established by intellectuals, lawyers, professors of ideas, doctors of philosophy or second class minds from Oxford. The Party was founded by ordinary working-class men and women who thought for themselves in line with their own class interests.

In fact the split from the SDF was largely due to the dictatorial and undemocratic actions of the SDF leadership and its social reform programme. But even this is to underestimate the real influence. What really influenced the thinking of the early members of the Party was the class struggle, what Marx referred to as "*the motor force of history*".

At the meeting in 1904 to formally constitute the Socialist Party of Great Britain, the centrality of the class struggle rather than the influence of individuals was underscored.

This was again stated in the **Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Great Britain**, published in 1905:

"Realising that the economic forces working through the development of capitalist society demanded the formation of a revolutionary Socialist party, believing that the emancipation of the working-class can be accomplished only by the members of that class consciously organised in a

Socialist party, and recognising that the class-struggle can alone be the basis of such a party ..." (p11).

So why should the Clapham Socialist Party want to place De Leon as an important influence on the Party? Why do they want to refer to the SLP as "*our political cousins*"? The reason is political. They want to share the same political platform with De Leonists in the US. They believe, to use the phrase of one of their former members, that they all belong to the same "*non-market anti-statist*" club. Utopian anarchism and opportunism by another name.

Iraq: The War for Oil

Tony Blair repeatedly claimed that Iraq's oil was not the reason for invading Iraq. However, one of the first strategic objects of the invasion was for the British and American troops to secure the 600 oil fields in the country. And while every government building, hotel, hospital, museum had been looted in front of the "*liberators*", the ministry of Oil was protected. Nation States go to war to protect oil routes, to secure raw resources and to maintain spheres of strategic interest.

As for furthering strategic interests, the US plans to use Iraq to maintain "*a long term strategic foothold in the Middle East that would include the right to use four of the country's military bases*" (**Independent**, 21 April 2003).

Wars are never fought for "*freedom*" and "*democracy*". Wars are caused by capitalism and fought by nation states over property squabbles. This has nothing to do with the interest of the working class. They have no property to die for. Their war is the class war; the abolition of capitalism and its replacement with Socialism.

EXPANDING EUROPEAN CAPITALISM

We have received a 3 page document from what purports to be **The Independent Socialist Forum Against Nice**. This organisation, based in Dublin, was set up to campaign for a no-vote in last year's referendum on the Treaty of Nice for the enlargement of the European Union. The Forum says it is open to all non-aligned Socialists.

The first thing to note is that Socialists do not campaign about particular aspects of capitalism, either in Europe or elsewhere in the world. The one objective of Socialists is to rid the world of capitalism and replace it with Socialism. Socialism is nowhere mentioned by the Forum. The only alignment possible for Socialists is in organisations such as the Socialist Party of Great Britain, committed to Socialist Principles and the pursuit of Socialism. This means the end of nations and therefore of groups of nations and through the establishment of world-wide common ownership of the means of production and distribution, the end of classes (employers and employees), the abolition of the wages-system in favour of production solely for use. From this it can be seen that whatever else the Independent Forum may be it is not Socialist.

Let us have a look at some of their fallacious arguments and attitudes. They argue that: *"Already the EU suffers, not from a 'democratic deficit' but from democratic bankruptcy."*

This follows their attack on the Irish government for "... *breaking election promises left, right and centre - making cut-backs in health and education; refusing to pay public sector workers what they are owed ...*" and forcing "*the Treaty down our throats because it suits the interests of their class*". So, "*democracy*" is just as bankrupt at the national state level as it is in the sprawling beaurocracy of EU capitalism! Capitalists and their governments always ruthlessly pursue their class interests which are antagonistic to those of the working class and also in conflict with those of other capitalists. The

conflicting interests of competing capitalists are what lies behind all the problems, the enlargement of European Union will impose on weaker Eastern European countries.

Being among the economically most powerful nations in Europe has not saved Germany and France from the effects of the world slump of 2001/2. In Germany, unemployment reached 4 million ie 10% of the workforce, while France had the same percentage unemployed.

Leftists of the Forum Against Nice type have wasted generalisations formulating policies and offering advice for the "better", "more democratic" running of capitalism at the national-state level. Now they are trying to improve capitalism continentally while the pressing need of our time is to spread Socialist understanding among workers everywhere. This they have never done.

The Forum group argues that: "*The European Union is based on Thatcherite economic principles. Governments are banned from subsidising industries and services which could lead to a distortion of competition'. Public spending has to be kept below a very tight level, otherwise states can be fined and forced to change policy*". More evidence of capitalists struggling for advantage. The more such rules - the more unwieldy the bureaucracy, the more inefficient and unworkable. But what does '*Thatcherite economics*' really mean? Wage-labour and capital, commodity production and the struggle for markets and profits are bourgeois economics. Take a look at Karl Marx.

They further argue that :

"Nice is the latest step in strengthening the economic, military and political power of European big business - a process that attacks the interests of workers in Europe and across the world."

In this connection it is strange that they fail to notice the rival power of the

USA! Workers interests are pushed aside in favour of profits because the capitalist class own the means of production - not because of the scale of their operation. American militarism dwarfs that of Europe. The United States' arms expenditure is equal to the next nine highest spenders put together.

It would be worthwhile for Forum members to study our Declaration of Principles. Drafted in 1904, the first part of Clause 6 states:

"That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government

The remoteness of the bureaucracy in Europe which hands down edicts to those it rules is not different in principle from the single nations of capitalism. Look at India, Pakistan, Japan, China, Canada, Turkey or Tunisia and so on. They all have armed forces. They all exploit wage-labour. They all compete for markets and profits. India and Pakistan have threatened nuclear war earlier this year. Workers everywhere are wage-slaves and cannon-fodder. They will remain so for as long as they vote for and support the political parties of capitalism.

Looking at the history of post-war Europe and the geography of the proposed EU expansion, the confrontation has moved from Western Europe facing East Europe to ex-Warsaw Pact countries as the front line economically and militarily with the former Soviet Union. Those who see the EU as having held the peace in Europe for 50 years should remember NATO's war against Serbia in 1999, having also bombed Bosnian Serbs in 1995.

A six-page leaflet published by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office sets out the perceived advantages to British and European capitalists in the enlargement of the EU. The first of these is:

"More trade. UK companies will have access to the largest single market in the world; over 500 million consumers, larger than the USA and Japan combined."

The FCO forgot that India has twice that number of consumers and China even more than that. But as a power bloc guarding its own markets, the enlarged EU only declares its hostility to the rest. The geography of war potential has simply changed.

Another advantage of enlargement as perceived by the FCO is that: *"An end to the old East/West division in Europe will lead to greater stability and security"*. Among the further 12 countries negotiating entry are Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. All 12 are either former members of the Warsaw Pact and part of Russia's sphere of influence or were actually part of the old Soviet Union. Without going into how Stalin conscripted Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia into the USSR, it remains a fact that Estonia is less than 200 miles from Leningrad and Latvia and Lithuania about 480 miles from Moscow. Some of the big strategic objectives of 50 years of cold-war will have been gained without a shot being fired.

It remains to be seen whether those who make policy decisions for Russian capitalism will resent their isolation, or whether they will find trade with the expanded EU to their advantage and what part will be played by oil development and marketing. Russia is still regarded as a major player with its massive nuclear arsenal and despite its relative economic backwardness after 74 years of Bolshevism is accepted in the councils of the G8 and invited into those of NATO. Who could have predicted that would happen when NATO was set up in 1949, with the Soviet Union the intended target of its war-machine?

Predicting the detailed working out of future situations under capitalism, beyond the generalisation that competition and conflict will remain inherent features of an unstable society, is a hazardous pastime. Rival capitalists form

such alliances as they interpret their profit interests demand. A system of competition and recurring wars and crises is bound to engender spying and lying and more suspicion than trust.

Workers should not involve themselves in the pros and cons of expanding European capitalism. They should recognise that the interests of workers throughout the world are the same. The Forum group should know that smaller and weaker countries have always been at the mercy of the bigger, more powerful ones. All the colonial empires of history testify to this. The Forum's proposals are all quite futile. The ruling classes in the smaller countries play by the same rules, the wealthy few live on the backs of their workers. In their concern about the "*ravages of market*" they entirely miss the ravages of the labour-market, which most concerns workers. When capitalism is replaced by Socialism, this most degrading feature of capitalism will be abolished with the rest of it.

Scientists stating the Very Obvious

Famines are not caused by lack of food. "*The world as a whole produces more than enough food for everyone. People go hungry because they lack the money to buy it*" wrote David Concar (**New Scientist**, 14 December 2002).

But he forgot to mention one other trivial point - that foodstuff, like furniture and footwear, is produced primarily for profit. Not so much to feed the bellies of the hungry as to stuff the purses and bank accounts of traders, dealers, supermarket owners and shareholders, bankers and all those various useless people who get their living in an unproductive way.

That, after all, is how the capitalist system operates. In capitalism, famine is caused by economic conditions, not by natural forces. Like homelessness, hunger is simply evidence of poverty.

Straight and Crooked Thinking

Socialists are often accused of holding dogmatic beliefs, of seeing the world in terms of black and white rather than in murky shades of grey.

The accusation is usually made by those who assert "*there is no alternative to capitalism*", and "*the market system is natural and will last forever*". A bit like the kettle calling the pot black.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain is a Marxist party. We hold that Marx's theory of history, his political concept of class struggle and his labour theory of value are sound and valid, and helps form a scientific understanding of capitalism as a transient social system, shot through with conflict and contradiction, and passing from one trade depression to the next.

Our opponents tell us that Marxism has been rejected by experience. They say that it is no longer an accurate portrayal of the world.

Take for example the book "*Straight and Crooked Thinking*" (1991) written by R H Thouless and C R Thouless.

They write:

"The basis of Marxism is a theory about the development of human societies. Karl Marx's study of history suggested to him that societies went through several stages of development. Primitive societies turned into feudal ones, which evolved into capitalist societies. In these the ruling classes, the bourgeoisie did not own the workers, the proletariat, but paid for their labour. As a result of the inherent conflicts within such a society and the impoverishment of the proletariat under capitalism, Marx predicted that revolution would follow. The resulting "dictatorship of the proletariat" would develop into fully fledged communism, in which the

class system would finally have been destroyed and mankind would live in brotherhood and bliss" (p134).

And the authors then go on to say;

"This is a very useful theory. It gave the world an important new way of looking at history and the economic forces shaping society. However, Marxism has gone beyond the status of a political theory. Its central tenets, including the importance of class struggle, the inevitability of the victory of the proletariat in the class war and the superiority of a planned economy over free enterprise, have become articles of faith in a religion. Marxism lays itself open to testing rather more than most religions since it makes specific predictions about how history will progress" (p135).

And they conclude;

"It is more than 100 years since Marx formulated his theory and there has been plenty of opportunity to test it against the reality of history. It has simply failed the test of time. Capitalist societies have proved much more resistant than Marx expected ..." (p135).

As an example of *straight and crooked thinking* what are we to make of the assertions about Marxism put forward by the two authors?

Where in Marx's writings did he predict the establishment of Socialism/Communism? Certainly he was optimistic about the establishment of a classless society but he did not give any date. Capitalism, as class systems go, is relatively young. So our two authors make a simple inductive fallacy. But just because Socialism has not yet been established does not mean that it never will be established.

Unemployment: a Universal Leveller

A barrier which blocks a clear understanding of the necessity to establish Socialism is to believe the working class is only made up of manual workers living on council estates. Many workers sit smugly in their living rooms reading the *Times*, planning their children's private education and checking on the ups and downs of their shares in the misguided belief that they are "*middle class*" and lead lives separate from those who they boss around at work.

So it comes as a rude awakening where reality bites. Managers who once thought they were aloof from the administrative assistant, the till operator and the person who stacks the shelves suddenly find themselves sacked. And this is precisely what happened at Sainsbury.

Sainsbury had been having a torrid time against its competitors. Profit rates had dropped and investors and shareholders wanted something done about it. A new chief executive was appointed. And one of the first actions he carried out was to sack a fifth of Sainsbury's store managers because "*they lacked the qualities suitable for being a store manager*" (*Times*, 18 March 2002), which, in Sainsbury's case meant not being profitable enough. Not so smug now.

Unemployment is a great leveller. It clearly defines who and who is not working class. The sacked managers will have to find employment elsewhere, perhaps take a large pay cut as many ex-KMPG accountants now have to do. Perhaps in this new reality they will begin to understand that they are members of the working class and that capitalism can never be made to work in their interests.

As for the investors, they are now happy that Sainsbury is making a profit again. In fact Lord Sainsbury gave away £2.5m of his unearned income to the Labour Party. KMPG was the largest company donor in the last quarter of 2002 with a £60,000 gift. The capitalist class, unlike the working class, know where their interest lays.

DO ECONOMISTS AND POLITICIANS CONTROL THE ECONOMY

In economics examinations students are never asked the important question: "*Do economists and politicians control the economy*"? The unquestioned assumption is that they do. However this is not the case.

The Treasury has a mathematical model of the economy described in about three hundred quotations. The model has failed to predict any economic depression over the past four decades. All that has occurred during this time is an increase in the employment of economists. In the 1950's there were only half a dozen or so economic advisers employed by the Treasury. Current recruitment advertising by the Treasury proclaims that the government's economics service is now 800 strong (*Times Appointments*, May 1 2001). As economics declines into theoretical incompetence the number of economists continues to rise.

Other financial institutions like the Bank of England have their own respective economists and economic models. The economists at the Bank of England, in the various Think Tanks, at the Treasury and in the City banks might all disagree on policy but they all agree that their respective models reflect, explain and can make changes to the real economy of commodity production and exchange for profit.

The Bank of England believes that it has a "*lever*" to control the economy through the interest rate mechanism. By either raising or lowering interest rates the Governor of the Bank and his economic advisors assume that they can alter economic behaviour, control inflation and manage the trade cycle and so ensure smooth, sustainable growth.

Economic reality has shown that this is not so. Generally, interest rates are set by market conditions, usually by willing lenders lending money to willing

borrowers not by the dictates of the Bank's Economic Monetary Board. Inflation is caused by governments issuing more currency than is needed for trade. The anarchy of commodity production can never be predicted from one trade cycle to the next. And figures for growth are constantly being revised up and down as economists react to events seemingly incapable of producing reliable forecasts.

The government also believes it can control the economy and economic behaviour through taxation, government spending and subsidies. Again, experience has shown this is not the case. A sudden economic crisis and trade depression means less taxation adversely affecting the government's policies. The consequence is a history of broken electoral promises with cuts made to health, social services and education by all governments of the day, both Conservative and Labour. Increased government spending has never prevented economic crises and high levels of unemployment. If governments were able to manage the economy the trade depressions of the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's, when unemployment peaked at over three million unemployed, would not have happened.

The use of subsidies to favour particular industries, services or to protect markets, brings out the absurd irrationality of capitalism. The European Community, for example, has paid farmers in Britain £239 per hectare not to grow anything despite the starving millions throughout the world. Rape can be grown on this land on the condition that it is not used for food. In 2002 British farmers were paid £150 million to take 1.5 million acres out of production to reduce the EU's agricultural surpluses (**Private Eye**, May 2003). Production for profit means just that, profit at the expense of human need even though it results in food mountains coexisting with mass starvation.

So accustomed are the working class to being told that economists and politicians control the economy that when there is a serious economic problem the culprits are identified as being economists and politicians, not capitalism itself.

This can be seen at the moment with the global downturn and the experience some countries face of high levels of unemployment. One group who is frequently blamed is the government of the day. In Argentina, where there has been a major economic crisis, Presidents and Finance Ministers are replaced in quick succession as demonstrators demand answers to why they have become either bankrupt or unemployed. In Germany the Chancellor is blamed as unemployment persists in remaining at over 4 million. In Japan successive Prime Ministers have tried every known economic theory in the book - economic liberalism, Keynesianism, monetarism, nationalisation and privatisation and almost zero interest rates - to get Japan out of a long depression all without success.

Japan is of particular interest. In April 2001 the new Japanese government under "Koizumi-mania" was elected into power with high school girls queuing for posters of the 61 year old Prime Minister. The queues have disappeared as fast as they appeared while the economy still remains in depression.

Public spending has been frozen and Japan's banks have been forced to write off billions of pounds of bad loans. There is record unemployment, bankruptcies and the forced nationalisation of a leading bank. The stock market has fallen to its lowest level for 20 years and international credit rating agencies have awarded Japanese government bonds a rating lower than those of Botswana.

The Prime Minister, in a current interview said that everyone "*is racking his brain, trying to address the current economic stagnation*" (Times, 29 May 2003).

He went on to say:

"Over the past ten years or so, the Government of Japan has mobilised fiscal policy [Keynesianism] and monetary policy [Monetarism],

fiscal outlays (Keynesianism again) and reduced interest rates (Monetarism again) and so on, and yet they have failed to kick-start the economy". So much for economic theory.

Of course there would be one person who would not be wracking his brains. And that person would be Karl Marx. He wrote that:

"... capitalist production moves through certain periodical cycles. It moves through a state of quiescence, growing animation, prosperity, overtrade, crisis and stagnation" (Wages, Price and Profit).

Marx's conclusion was that capitalism was destructive, anarchic and anti-human. It works against the interest of the working class who bear the brunt of its cyclical depressions through unemployment, social alienation and hardship. Marx's conclusion was that the working class should consciously and politically act in its own interests and replace capitalism with Socialism.

Trade unionists and most workers refuse to accept Marx's conclusion. In Britain the manufacturing and financial sectors have been particularly hit with high levels of unemployment. It is predicted that 80,000 workers will be made redundant in the industrial sector during the second half of the year with the National Institute of Economic and Social Research claiming that there was little sign of recovery (*Independent*, 9 May 2003).

The unions and CBI ignorantly demand action, saying that a switch of currency from the pound to the Euro will solve the problem or that the Bank of England should lower interest rates. The government tells them that they have no control over the world economy and cannot throw "fairy dust" to help out companies like Corus when they cannot sell their steel at a profit and are forced to make workers redundant.

The Chancellor and Ministers are quick to blame world events which, they claim, they have no control over. In the past politicians have blamed greedy consumers for economic problems by having too much credit. Other factors that have been blamed by politicians have been trade unionists, fat cats in the City, wars and the weather. Everyone is blamed except production for profit. Criticism of capitalism is conveniently avoided.

Capitalism is never seen as the problem. The institutions of capitalism are blamed the

World Bank, the IMF, protectionism, free trade and the World Trade Organisation but never the antisocial process of commodity production and exchange for profit. When the anti-capitalists are protesting they are not protesting against the wages system but against economic institutions, US capitalism and globalisation. Never the market which they believe can be reformed to become fair and equitable. The very existence of the labour market, of buying and selling someone's ability to work, employees wages, and salaries and the price mechanism is unquestioned as though they are natural and beyond human ability to abolish and replace with a more rational alternative. Production for use, free access and voluntary and co-operative social labour is never considered. It should be.

Capitalism is not a "thing". Capitalism is a mode of production. Capitalism is the sum total of social relationships. Capitalism is a worldwide social system where people relate to the means of production as owners or as non-owners; as capitalists or as workers. A world capitalist class confronts a world working class over the extent and intensity of exploitation. Ultimately the class struggle is over who owns and controls the earth's resources.

Marx analysed capitalism. He spent most of his adult life demonstrating that capitalism could never be made to work in the interests of the working class. He showed capitalism was unstable, prone to economic crisis and periodic high unemployment with all the social consequences that follow: racism, the unpleasant scramble for jobs and social strife. He showed that capitalism was destructive, highly volatile, anarchic and exploitative. In the history of capitalism, as Marx explained, periods of good trade and low unemployment alternate erratically and unpredictably with periods of bad trade and high unemployment.

Unlike modern day economists, Marx produced no economic model with elaborate mathematical equations. What he did do was to carry out a sustained critique of political economy from his analysis of the individual commodity through to his explanation of capital in motion.

And in his critique Marx showed that the market was not harmonious and the information prices provided was extremely narrow and sometimes wrong. The seller might be a buyer to market but no buyer has to purchase a commodity; they could leave empty-handed, buy something else, save or lend the money for interest. No seller can ever know that they will have a buyer and can sell their commodity at a price which will realise a profit

This problem for capitalists lies at the heart of the causes and consequences of economic crises, trade depressions, bankruptcies and high levels of unemployment.

The problem of capitalism's anarchy of production is insoluble, no matter how many economists are given Nobel Prizes. The reality of capitalism is that it will stumble from one economic crisis to another until the working class take the necessary conscious and political action to replace the profit system with Socialism.

Class struggle in China and in Britain

The Chinese government sentenced two workers to lengthy prison terms after they were convicted of "subversion" in connection with one of the largest labour protests in modern Chinese history.

The two workers were detained last March 2002 for organising illegal protests in the heart of China's "rust belt" where nationalised industries have been shedding millions of jobs. Thousands of workers took part in the demonstrations.

Whether State capitalism or private capitalism, the class struggle still takes place between employers and workers over the intensity and extent of exploitation. The State will always attack the working class when it is against the interest of the capitalist class as a whole.

In Britain, as in China. The Labour government has just passed in May 2003 an anti-working class piece of legislation forcing the firefighters to accept a pay deal and worsen their terms of employment.

And the free market fanatics are utterly silent when the State intervenes in the labour market on behalf of employers - surprise, surprise!

A letter to the New Scientist:

The claim that economics is a "hardheaded", "empirical" science has me gob smacked (New Scientist 14 January 2003 "No free lunches"). Try finding a definition of poverty or an explanation of famine, and all you will get from economists is a variety of unreconcilable opinions.

The idea that, on pesticides - the example cited - economists can claim as a cost-benefit trade-off that, without these chemicals, there would be starvation suggests that they have ignored the research done by the Nobel Prize-winning economist, Dr Amartya Sen. He showed how famines are a function of the way the economic laws of supply and demand have the effect of drawing food and other commodities away from regions impoverished by crop-failures. This actually worsens the situation in such regions. Hence the paradoxical fact that while many of the poorer people are starving to death, food will still be exported from such regions.

Think of the Irish potato famine: starvation was due to poverty - the high price of wheat - as well as the potato blight. Think of the 1943 Bengal famine: this was due to the manipulation of market prices by hoarding and speculation, rather than to any actual shortage of rice. Think of the great Chinese famine: this was due to Mao's policy, the command economy, and competition between local Party officials to report vastly increased output, with horrific consequences for the peasants. That it was a '*political*' rather than a '*natural*' famine, is shown by the fact that it happened in all provinces of China: wheat-growing and rice-growing regions were all affected at the same time and to much the same extent.

Or think of Malawi today: afflicted by HIV/AIDS, by drought, and in addition by advice from powerful World Bank economists, result the Malawi government was *persuaded* to sell off its grain reserves!

And yet your reviewer Michael Cross, accepts such economics as science - some science!

A letter to the Economist:

How disappointing - I feel like asking for the return of my subscription. Your article, **Marx after Communism** (December 21 2002), trots out all those second-hand cliches of the school textbook, so wide of the mark as to suggest that the writer has not so much studied Marx for himself as simply read some books about Marx, written in turn by authors with an axe to grind and given to somewhat selective quoting.

For instance you give us the usual picture of Marx as an economic determinist: "*what shapes society, the ONLY thing that shapes society, is the 'material forces of production!!'*" For Marx "*human agency is null*". But then you accuse him for his "*zeal for activism*". You really can't have it both ways.

In fact Marx's position was not as simplistic as the either/or structure of agency, straightjacket that your essayist suggests. Marx argued that "*Man makes his own history ... but he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself*".

Also Engels answered this 'economic determinism' misrepresentation in a letter "*the determining element in history is ULTIMATELY the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the ONLY determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase*".

Your essayist claims that: "*Class war, if it ever existed, is over*". I will believe that when I learn of companies and governments volunteering to offer pay increases to workers, in preference to dividends to shareholders. Your essayist is clearly not taking the right medicine if he imagines that companies are owned by "*workers for hire - the proletariat*". Statistics show that only a small minority of the population own enough to be able to afford to give up paid employment and support themselves and their dependants on rent, interest and

profit. Like it or not, there is a class struggle, a conflict of interests between buyers and sellers in any market, including the labour market.

As for Soviet Russia, you do not even mention the argument first used by Lenin himself that what was being introduced was state capitalism "*on the German model*". Russia, you say, "*went straight from feudalism to Socialism. This was too quick. Marx could have told Lenin that it would never work*". Indeed he did. As a matter of historical fact both Marx and Engels did argue this point against the Russian Narodniks, with their dream of by-passing capitalism and building Socialism on the basis of the peasant *mir* or *obschchina*. Moreover, there is a lot of historical evidence that, long before 1914, Russia had been developing a capitalist economy - backward, yes, but not feudal.

Then we had that tired old chestnut, the "*falling rate of profit*". This had been discovered by earlier (classical) economists. Writing much later, Marx noted that, if the rate of profit was falling, it was doing so rather slowly. He concluded that, against the undeniable, underlying "*tendency*" of the rate of profit to fall - largely as the result of increasing labour productivity - there must also be at work various countervailing forces (v *Capital*, vol III).

Finally, you claim that Marx deplored "*liberal political rights*" and had "*disdain for liberal 'rights' and 'freedom'*". How does this square with his opposition to state censorship or his urging that the workers should organise themselves "*as a political party*"?

But, of course, that would not fit the caricature of Marx you offered your readers. That was simply a straw man, set up for cheap journalistic jibes.

What remains of interest - and was not explained in that essay - was why Marx's analysis of the workings of capitalism is utterly ignored by modern economists. Any answers?

LECTURE SERIES 2003

26th October 2003

The War in Iraq and the Weapons of Mass Destruction

Speaker: H. Baldwin.

9th November 2003

Why the Working class does not need the Capitalist class.

Speaker: R. Lloyd.

23rd November 2003

The Road to Socialism - Parliament or Direct Action

Speaker: R. Cumming.

7th December 2003

The Working Class: Pensions and Poverty

Speaker: S. Skelton.

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meets at 6 pm on the 4th Tuesday of month at

51 Argyle Street, London WC1 (5 mins. Kings Cross Tube Station).

All meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome.

World Socialist Party (India)

The Ninth Annual Conference (February 21-23, 2003) of the World Socialist Party (India) has severed the Party's companionship with the Socialist Party (Clapham) by withdrawing its misplaced recognition of them, while recognising The Socialist Party of Great Britain, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB as the genuine SPGB.

The above was an e-mail we received from the WSP (India). They came to this conclusion after we (and Clapham) had provided them with all the relevant documents concerning our expulsion from Clapham and the various allegations we have made of the propaganda emanating from Clapham. We welcome this move by the Indian Party, and we along with them, will now discuss what joint measures we can take to further the spread of Socialist ideas.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.

That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.

That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO...

The Socialist Party of Great Britain,

11 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

email: enquiries@spgb.org.uk

www.spgb.org.uk

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

HEAD OFFICE

71 ASHBOURNE COURT
WOODSIDE PARK ROAD
LONDON N12 8SB

Tel: [REDACTED]

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by, and in the interests of, the whole community.

Please Reply to:
Head Office

July 2003.

Dear Subscriber,

I have pleasure in enclosing your issue No. 48, and my apologies for late arrival due to a hitch at the printers. All copies had been machined, but due to a slip up, one page was missing from the text of the last article, which as you can imagine, did not read well. However, printing a revised page brings you the finished product. I hope it makes interesting reading.

Since my last letter in April, the last few weeks have been busy, as we attend various venues for Conferences, Lectures etc. We had a good day at the Levellers Festival in Burford, Oxon, distributing a special leaflet with pamphlet sales of £25. A trip to Bournemouth for the Conference of the Communication Workers Union, where we were able to have our literature stand inside the conference centre; up to Bridlington for the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Conference (again with an invitation to have our table inside the hall; back to Brighton for 2 days at the Unison conference; a 3 day visit to Paris for the Lutte Ouvrière (probably one of France's political gatherings) with some stimulating discussions, names and addresses of interested enquirers, and some lit. sales; back to Brighton for the T & G.W. Conference. Lectures at Conway Hall, and I.C.A. and Royal Institute in London gave us an outlet for sales. Our total sales for the 5 months up to the end of June come to just £960.00 - a record since we re-constituted the SPGB in June 1991. About half a dozen members are able to carry on this vital work.

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A somewhat quieter period over the next 2/3 months, and at our next joint Branch meeting later this month, we shall be making plans for our next Lecture series in the Autumn; full details in No. 49.

In the meantime, many thanks for your continued support and the many letters of appreciation we receive concerning the quality of our written propaganda. For those of a like mind, we had 2,100 hits on our web-site in the first 2 weeks in June. And we still welcome applications for membership.

Best wishes.

Yours for Socialism,

Cyril May, General Secretary.

Cyril May